HP ProLiant BL strategy for rapid deployment and reprovisioning of high-density servers

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Abstract

The HP ProLiant BL program is an integral part of HP infrastructure for the Adaptive Enterprise. This brief identifies critical challenges facing information technology (IT) organizations, describes HP strategy in launching the ProLiant BL product development program, and explains how the ProLiant BL program addresses the major computing challenges in these environments.

IT resource challenges

On top of pressure for lower costs and greater operational efficiency, IT organizations must juggle the growing scope of change needed to support a variety of business initiatives. For many corporations today's goal is to transform themselves into adaptive enterprises where IT is a provider of a single set of dynamically scalable resources that enable business users to tap into IT services whenever required.

As the IT role transforms to service provider for the enterprise, enterprise IT faces the need to automate key processes that maximize utilization of resources. The ability to scale both up and down automatically and deliver IT service in a utility-like fashion requires a highly adaptive, integrated computing infrastructure.

HP strategy

Recognizing the challenges of the current environment, HP developed components of an infrastructure for the Adaptive Enterprise. This infrastructure is powered by three interrelated, core capabilities: the ability to establish and maintain continuous and secure operations; the ability to plan, monitor, and control devices in response to changing demands; and the ability to dynamically provision, assign, and share resources whenever needed.

The HP ProLiant BL program exemplifies how HP technology can enable an Adaptive Enterprise through a modular design that simplifies deployment and maintenance, high-availability and high-performance features, and integrated management and security features.

The HP ProLiant BL program includes an entire portfolio of industry-standard server blades with a common interface for use in multi-tiered computing environments requiring everything from front-end servers to higher performance mid-tier and back-end servers. The target market for these solutions includes large enterprise customers and service providers who require high levels of flexibility and efficiency from their IT organizations and an overall better return on their IT investment.

As part of the ProLiant BL program, HP developed modular servers that customers can quickly deploy in standard racks, right along with existing legacy servers and storage devices. HP also developed tools to enable rapid reallocation of resources for on-demand computing.

The strategy for the HP ProLiant BL program included the following objectives:

- Create a modular server architecture with tool-free mechanical designs, hot-plug components, increased system redundancy, power and space efficiency, and integrated virtual presence and control functionality.
- Build on innovative industry-standard technologies.
- Develop an architecture that will protect not only customer investments in existing IT infrastructure and hardware, but also their investment in the new blade architecture through support for next-generation server blades.
- Increase serviceability through modularity and simplified spares inventory.
- Create a common management interface and provide anytime, anywhere management access.
- Support current versions of top-tier operating systems.

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ProLiant BL solution

The ProLiant BL portfolio addresses all tiers of a multi-tiered architecture. An open strategy for networking and storage, spanning one-, two-, and four-processor systems, enables enterprise data centers, service providers, and telecommunications companies to build a complete, multi-tiered adaptive infrastructure using blade servers. To maximize its value and strengthen the commonality across all ProLiant products, the ProLiant BL line takes advantage of management and system deployment technology developed for all ProLiant servers.

The ProLiant BL portfolio is designed to provide specific customer benefits including:

- Better utilization of valuable data center rack space
- More efficient use of data center power resources
- Simplified cable management and network cable reduction
- Investment protection for customers' existing infrastructure and hardware
- Increased serviceability through modularity and simplified spares inventory

Modular infrastructure

The ProLiant BL portfolio uses a modular infrastructure that separates components to help enable a truly adaptive enterprise and provide maximum flexibility and investment protection for customers. The ProLiant BL Line includes four key components:

- Server blade and power enclosures
- Server blades
- Interconnects
- Power infrastructure

ProLiant BL architecture is designed to protect customer investments in two important ways: by providing longevity of the ProLiant BL server and interconnect architecture and by enabling installation of ProLiant BL server blades in standard racks along with legacy servers and storage.

Server blade and power enclosures

The cornerstone of the ProLiant BL architecture is a set of server blade and power enclosures that install easily in 19-inch-wide HP, third-party, and telecommunication (telco) racks, allowing customers to deploy ProLiant BL server blades along with existing hardware for full utilization of racks. In this architecture, the power subsystem is decoupled from individual server blades to improve power efficiency, to increase server availability, and to significantly improve cable management in densely populated racks.

The ProLiant BL server blade enclosures include a 3U e-Class enclosure and a 6U p-Class enclosure. The ProLiant BL e-Class enclosure accommodates up to 20 ProLiant BL10e servers and allows customers to deploy up to 280 ProLiant BL10e server blades in a standard 42U rack. The p-Class enclosure accommodates a mixture of ProLiant BL20p and ProLiant BL40 p server blades, as well as the p-Class interconnect options.

ProLiant BL servers include HP industry-leading technologies such as tool-free mechanical designs and hot-plug components. To drive commonality across the entire ProLiant line, each ProLiant BL server also includes light-emitting diodes (LEDs) on the front to indicate the status of power, network interface controller (NIC) link and activity, disk drive activity, and health of the blade. A blue unit identification LED on the front can be activated remotely to help a user on site find a specific blade instantly in a densely loaded rack.

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Server blades

ProLiant BL server blades are designed for rapid deployment and provisioning, virtual presence and control, and rip-and-replace serviceability. The ProLiant BL product portfolio includes two distinct families of server blades: the BL e-Class and BL p-Class product lines.

The BL e-Class product line includes an ultra-dense, power-efficient edge server blade engineered for the enterprise. The BL e-Class consists of the ProLiant BL 10e, a front-end server blade that supports a single, ultra low-voltage Intel® Pentium®-M processor and fits in a 3U enclosure.

The p-Class product line consists of the ProLiant BL20p and the BL40p. The ProLiant BL20p is a mid-tier server blade that supports two Intel Xeon™ DP processors. The ProLiant BL40p server supports four Intel Xeon MP processors and is ideal for back-end applications such as databases and messaging applications.

Interconnects

Each ProLiant BL server blade has multiple, redundant embedded NICs. Individual category 5e specified signal traces on the passive backplane of the server blade enclosure route network signals from the NICs to the interconnect options installed in the enclosure. Multiple interconnect options for ProLiant BL server blade enclosures give customers flexibility to choose the solution they prefer. Patch panel options provide pass-through of network signals while interconnect switches provide integrated Ethernet switching, significantly improving cable management for the rack and facilitating the rapid deployment of ProLiant BL server solutions.

Power infrastructure

The ProLiant BL power infrastructure is decoupled from the individual server blades and provides redundant power throughout the rack.

Two 1+1 redundant hot-plug power supplies provide power directly to the e-Class enclosure using either 110 or 208 volts alternating current (AC). The two power supplies convert the power to 600 watts each of direct current (DC) that is shared by all server blades in the enclosure.

The ProLiant BL p-Class power infrastructure provides redundant power throughout the rack. The power enclosures hold up to six hot-plug power supplies and contain the power management module for monitoring the power infrastructure. The ProLiant BL p-Class bus bars distribute power to the server blade enclosures and drastically reduce cabling. The power infrastructure provides sufficient redundant power to support today's and future BL p-Class systems.

Enabling such dense server deployment and disaggregating the power subsystem for ProLiant BL server products required innovative management and monitoring systems. For BL e-Class solutions, HP designed a robust management system called the Integrated Administrator. It provides a single console for complete remote, out-of-band management and monitoring of the BL e-Class system. For BL p-Class solutions, HP designed management modules for the server enclosures that monitor power, server blade health, and overall enclosure health. A power management module in each BL p-Class power enclosure also monitors power available from the enclosure and from each power supply it contains.

Management and deployment technology

As an integral part of the ProLiant BL program, HP developed management software to provide rapid volume deployment across all ProLiant systems, a common management interface for all ProLiant systems, and remote manageability.

All ProLiant BL infrastructure components with embedded firmware (such as the BL e-Class Integrated Administrator) provide a flash read-only memory (ROM) upgrade utility. Using this utility, IT administrators can upgrade the firmware while the system is running. For the upgrade to take effect,

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same firmware (for example, the server BIOS) requires a system rebaot; but that rebaat can be scheduled for a convenient time.

Althaugh the ProLiant BL architecture and management taals were designed far headless aperatian, administrators have full local access far configuratian and debugging by using the BL e-Class diagnastic adapter or the BL p-Class diagnastic cable. The e-Class diagnastic adapter pravides cannectars far keybaard, mouse, videa, twa Universal Serial Bus (USB) devices, and serial access ta the server blade's COM2 part. The BL p-Class diagnastic cable pravides a DB-9 cannector far kernel debug and an RJ-45 Integrated Lights-Out (iLO) cannecter. Select BL20p G2 servers ship with an input/autput (I/O) cable thot provides a video connector, two USB connectors, a DB-9 connector, and an RJ-45 iLO connector.

System management

Insight Monoger is the industry-leading web-bosed enterprise management console developed by HP. Insight Manager brings together in one location oll foult, performonce, and monagement information obout the IT infrastructure. By integroting current enterprise management technology with the latest advances in web technology, it enables IT administrators to monitor ond manage groups of servers, clients, clusters, and networking products from a standard web browser. Insight Monager is capable of discovering and monoging devices from HP ond other vendors using Simple Network Management Protocol (SNMP), Desktop Monagement Interfoce (DMI), and Hypertext Tronsfer Protocol (HTTP). It logs olerts from these devices, ond it sends email or poger notificotions of alerts to the oppropriote person based on the assigned roles ond responsibilities of the IT staff. To enoble customers to monoge server blade systems, Insight Manager provides some additional functionality, such as the on-screen visuolizotion of server blade enclosures, server blades, ond interconnect options.

Additional information obout Insight Manger is availoble at http://h18004.www1.hp.com/products/servers/manogement/index.html.

Rack and unit identification

Disoggregoting subsystems from ProLiont BL server blades required looking ot the tasks of monagement and deployment differently. For exomple, if the power subsystem is no longer locoted within the server chossis, then IT administrotors need the obility to monoge not only at the server level, but olso at the rock level.

ProLiont BL server blodes ond interconnect options hove the obility to report their unique physical location to the user through Insight Manoger, the iLO interface for BL p-Class systems, ond the Integrated Administrotor for BL e-Class systems. The ProLiont BL infrastructure provides the following pieces of doto required to identify a porticulor component by locotion:

- **Rack name** – the human readable nome assigned to a rock by the user. If the user has not assigned a name to a given rack, o default name of "Unnamed Rack" will be used.
- **Enclosure name** – the human readable nome given to on enclosure within a rack. If the user has not assigned a name to the enclosure, the serial number of the enclosure will be used os default.
- **Blade bay number** – the number of the bay in a server enclosure into which o ProLiont BL server or interconnect option is installed. The blode boy number is determined outomoticolly by the blode using bay identification pins or other mechanisms ond is not editable by the user. Blade bays in ProLiont BL enclosures are numbered left to right.

A stondords-bosed enclosure interconnect allows monagement dota ond alarms to be relayed to each connected BL e-Closs ond BL p-Closs server blade enclosure, including ProLiont BL-compatible enclosures such as rock monitors, storoge enclosures, and uninterruptible power supplies. The enclosure interconnect enables the rack topology ond location (rack/enclosure/boy) naming functionality.

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Cabling for the BL p-Class enclosure interconnect is implemented by a daisy chain through each enclosure to minimize cabling and allow the systems to isolate faults to specific segments. A cable fault or other failure on the enclosure interconnect will not take enclosed server blades off line. Server blade functions will continue with less status information available about the rack environment and the power subsystem.

Solution sizing

To assist in planning and preparing a site for installation of ProLiant BL servers, HP developed a ProLiant BL p-Class and e-Class sizing utilities. These utilities include brief reference specifications about ProLiant BL products and their components. The utilities contain interactive calculations that generate site planning information such as floor space requirements, power distribution requirements, and environmental specifications based on criteria entered by the user. By starting with the number of server blades and server blade options to be installed in each rack, the sizing utility helps users determine:

- The amount of DC power each rack will require for reliable operation.
- ProLiant BL power infrastructure needs for specific installations.
- The amount of facility AC infrastructure and AC load required to support each rack (that is, how many power circuits will be needed and the amount of power that will be drawn off each).
- The amount of heat load that each rack of ProLiant BL servers will generate in the data center (for sizing the cooling infrastructure).
- The approximate weight of and floor space required for each rack of ProLiant BL servers (for planning floor loading).

HP has also developed a set of white papers for guidance in establishing a deployment infrastructure and power planning. For ProLiant BL e-Class server blades, read *HP ProLiant BL e-Class System Overview and Planning*, available at ftp://ftp.compaq.com/pub/supportinformation/papers/173f0802b-wwen_rev1_us.pdf. For ProLiant BL p-Class server blades, read *HP ProLiant BL p-Class System Overview and Planning*, available at ftp://ftp.compaq.com/pub/supportinformation/papers/5981-6911en_rev2_us.pdf.

Rapid, volume system deployment

System deployment can be a time-consuming, labor-intensive task, especially when hundreds of components must be deployed quickly and reliably. The ProLiant Essentials Rapid Deployment Pack is a tool that automates the process of deploying and provisioning server software and configuring interconnect options. This automation enables companies to quickly and easily adapt their infrastructure to changing business demands. The ProLiant Essentials Rapid Deployment Pack integrates two powerful products: Altiris eXpress Deployment Solution and the HP SmartStart Scripting Toolkit. Altiris eXpress Deployment Solution features industry-standard Preboot Execution Environment (PXE) technology and multicasting technology. The SmartStart Scripting Toolkit includes a modular set of utilities for automating many steps in the process of configuring ProLiant servers. Sample server configuration scripts provide IT administrators a head start in customizing the tool to match individual customer needs.

The ProLiant Essentials Rapid Deployment Pack is a fast, easy, point-and-click solution for deploying servers and interconnect options using both imaging and scripting and for maintaining software images, all from a single, centralized deployment console. The deployment console provides an intuitive drag-and-drop of events, such as scripts and images, to deploy the operating systems and applications on ProLiant systems. With this tool, deploying systems is as easy as dragging and dropping predefined images or scripts onto one or hundreds of target systems simultaneously, thereby drastically reducing the amount of time and effort needed to get systems into production.

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The ProLiant Essentials Rapid Deployment Pack enables administrators to create a configuration script, or system profile, for target systems by copying and editing files of a configured source system. Administrators can then copy that configuration script and Scripting Toolkit utilities to a network share or bootable server configuration diskette. By combining scripts for configuration and operating system installation, IT administrators can rapidly configure a new server blade system and install the server operating system remotely. This remote process shrinks a typical installation time from hours or days to minutes, making it possible to scale server deployments to high volumes rapidly. Using this tool, IT administrators can concurrently deploy hundreds of server blades and interconnect options in less than 30 minutes without network degradation.

The ProLiant Essentials Rapid Deployment Pack was designed for use with all ProLiant servers and optimized for use with ProLiant BL server blade systems. Optimizations for ProLiant BL blades include advanced features that can detect and display blades based on their physical rack, enclosure, and bay location. All ProLiant BL server blades have PXE-enabled NICs; so when a ProLiant BL blade is installed, it will attempt to boot from the network. The ProLiant Essentials Rapid Deployment Pack can be configured to respond to the network boot; and using information supplied from the server blade enclosure (such as enclosure name and slot identification), it can automatically provision the server using a preconfigured script and image.

An administrator can use the ProLiant Essentials Rapid Deployment Pack to pre-assign a particular function or "role" to each server blade bay in an enclosure. For example, to have the mid-tier server blade in server blade bay number 4 run Microsoft® Windows® 2000 with Microsoft Internet Information Server (IIS) and some Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) scripting, the administrator would simply need to build that image, or profile, for bay 4 and load the image onto a deployment server. When an unconfigured ProLiant BL server blade is installed into bay 4, that server will seek out the deployment server, download the pre-assigned script, and begin working immediately without local intervention. If that server blade should fail at some later time and be replaced, the new server blade would automatically seek out the deployment server and download the pre-assigned script to configure itself identically. In other words, the new server blade would automatically take on the role of the failed server blade, significantly reducing the time and effort needed to keep servers in production. This "rip and replace" functionality is unique to the ProLiant Essentials Rapid Deployment Pack and ProLiant BL server blades.

Use of the ProLiant Essentials Rapid Deployment Pack maximizes customers' IT resources by providing a full server build from a remote, centralized deployment console for initial power on, automated component configuration on the fly, and installation of standard software sets based on customer-defined server configurations. More information about the ProLiant Essentials Rapid Deployment Pack solution is available at http://h18004.www1.hp.com/proudcts/servers/management/rdp/index.html.

Future directions

The HP ProLiant BL portfolio is an excellent example of how HP is driving its strategy for the Adaptive Enterprise throughout HP and ProLiant technologies—from servers and storage to management software—to maximize return on IT investment.

Investment protection

One way the ProLiant BL architecture is designed to protect customer investments is by providing longevity of the infrastructure. While the installation of BL servers into standard racks is a relatively straightforward concept, providing longevity in the blade infrastructure to support multiple generations of processors and networking technologies is much more difficult.

Through careful planning and design of power supplies, switches, and cooling capabilities, HP has designed investment protection into blade systems. For instance, the ProLiant BL p-Class enclosure

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began shipping in 2002 and supparted Intel Pentium III 1.4-GHz pracessars and 10/100-Mb/s Ethernet. Taday, that same enclasure supparts Intel Xean 3.06-GHz and 2.8-GHz pracessars, 1-Gb/s Ethernet, and Fibre Channel far starage area netwark (SAN) cannectivity. Likewise, the PraLiant BL p-Class GbE2 Intercannect Switch is designed with the ability ta suppart future Layer 7 and 10-GB Ethernet technalagies that will pravide increased perfarmance far bandwidth-intensive applicatians.

Utility blade vision

The PraLiant BL partfalia will cantinue ta evalve sa that it can play a majar rale in the Adaptive Enterprise as it is transfarmed in the trend ta pravide IT service in a utility-like fashian.

Taday, blades are madular servers plus an intelligent infrastructure. In the next generatian, blades will be campanent parts that enable higher levels af virtualizatian. Data centers will be larger with mare autamatian, and the campanent parts will allaw scaling IT service up and dawn and rapidly recanfiguring as needs dictate.

Revalutianary impravements and advancements in fabric technalagies will extend infrastructure capabilities and enable the utility blade visian. Remate Direct Memary Access (RDMA) technalagy will pravide scalability and perfarmance far the I/O subsystem and enable intercannect cansalidatian. Cannecting blade campanents aver an Internet Pratacal (IP) fabric, such as RDMA aver Transmissian Cantral Pratacal (TCP), will imprave perfarmance and utilizatian while simplifying and unifying the infrastructure.

Conclusion

In designing the PraLiant BL server line, HP cantinues ta extend its leadership in praviding innavative salutians that directly address the changing needs af enterprise custamers. The PraLiant BL architecture is designed ta pratect custamer investments in twa impartant ways: by praviding langevity af PraLiant BL servers and the intercannect architecture and by enabling installatian af the server blades in standard racks alang with legacy servers and starage. Madular PraLiant BL systems are aptimized far use with HP PraLiant Essentials saftware taals that selectively extend the functianality af an infrastructure that is adaptive ta address specific business prablems and needs. These saftware taals enable IT administratars ta canfigure and install aperating systems and applicatians autamatically ta a few, hundreds, ar thausands af systems simultaneausly.

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For more information

More information about ProLiant BL servers is available at
http://h18004.www1.hp.com/products/servers/platforms/index-bl.html
More information about Insight Manager is available at
http://h18004.www1.hp.com/products/servers/management/index.html
More information about the ProLiant Essentials Rapid Deployment Pack solution is available at
http://h18004.www1.hp.com/proudcts/servers/management/rdp/index.html.
The technology brief *HP ProLiant BL e-Class System Overview and Planning* is accessible at
ftp://ftp.compaq.com/pub/supportinformation/papers/173f0802b-wwen_rev1_us.pdf
The technology brief *HP ProLiant BL p-Class System Overview and Planning* is accessible at
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